

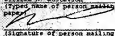
REPORT FOLDER

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a Continuation-in-part of pending U.S. utility Patent Application Serial Number 10/072,211 filed February 7, 2002, which claims priority from Provisional Patent Application Serial Number 60/276,270 filed March 15, 2001.

TECHNICAL FIELD

This invention relates to a report cover for containing a report or other documents.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>CERTIFICATE OF "EXPRESS" MAILING</b><br>(37 CFR 1.10)  |   |
| Mailing Label No. <u>EV31712843105</u>  |   |
| Date of Deposit: <u>August 22, 2001</u>   |   |
| I hereby certify that this paper (along with any paper referred to as being attached or enclosed) is being deposited with the US Postal Service Express Mail Post Office to Addressee Service on the date shown below with sufficient postage in an envelope addressed to: <u>Commissioner for Patents, PO Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450.</u> |   |
| Date: <u>August 22, 2001</u>  | <u>William F. Gustafson</u><br>(Type name of person mailing paper)  |
|   | <br>(Signature of person mailing paper) |

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Many methods have been developed to bind reports and other documents. One common method is the use of the flexible comb binding as sold by GBC Co. This binding has a plastic backing from which extends a series of adjacent plastic loops which each have an unattached, free end. The resiliency of the loops causes the free ends to curl in a circle to engage the backing to effectively form a closed loop. The documents to be bound are punched with rectangular holes along the inner edge of the documents to permit a loop to pass through each hole. A machine available from GBC and other sources is employed to open up the loops sufficiently to allow a person to fit the documents onto the loops. The machine then allows the loops to close, effectively binding the report.

The flexible comb binding comes in a variety of sizes, depending on the thickness of the document. However, it is common to use a binding having a larger diameter than the thickness of the document itself, resulting in the comb binding interfering with the normal use, appearance and storage of the document. For example, it is difficult to stack a series of documents bound by such a flexible comb binding as the binding has a greater diameter than the document thickness. Also, the flexible comb binding can catch on edges and interfere with the operation of the report and the plastic loops often pull apart from the document cover and sheets. Unlike conventionally bound books with titles printed on their spines, plastic comb binding makes spine titling very difficult. Without the title printed on the spine of a report, the report can't be identified from its edge.

Other bindings are common as well. Spiral binding is, literally, spiral wire or plastic coils which bind, for example, school writing pads and many reports bound by professional binderies. Spiral bindings, both metal and plastic, use round holes in the

## LOCH B-2046CIP

documents being bound. Another binding is metal loops or loop wire binding. A twin loop wire binding is common on planners.

All of these methods of binding perform the function of permitting the turning of pages in the bound report. However, the bindings are exposed and are thicker than the report itself, so that the reports can't be stacked flat like books. None of the binding methods provide for convenient spine titling, making filing, finding and retrieval of the report more difficult.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, a report cover is provided which includes a first member which has a series of holes therein to receive a flexible binding, the flexible binding holding a report therein. A second member has a back cover with a pocket, a side cover hingably connected to an edge of the back cover and a front cover hingably connected to an edge of the side cover. The first member engages the pocket in the second member. The second member encloses the flexible binding and the report to bind the report and provides a spine which may be tilted for easy shelf retrieval.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A more complete understanding of the invention and its advantages will be apparent from the following Detailed Description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying Drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a side cross sectional view of a report cover forming a first embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 2 is a plan view of the cover portion of the report cover;

Figure 3 is a plan view of the insert of the report cover and a flexible comb binding;

Figure 4 is a cross sectional view of the report cover closed over the report and flexible comb binding;

Figure 5 is a plan view of the cover portion, insert and flexible comb binding assembled, without the report;

Figure 6 is a detail view of an optional tab and receiver to hold the insert and report in the cover;

Figure 7 is a side cross sectional view of the report cover using a modified cover portion which is a single piece;

LOCH B-2046CIP

Figure 8 is a perspective view of the modified cover portion;

Figure 9 is a perspective view of the cover portion of Figure 8 being folded to form a pocket;

Figure 10 is a perspective view of the cover portion of Figure 8 further in the folding process to form the pocket; and

Figure 11 is a perspective view of the cover portion of Figure 8 folded to form the pocket and receive the insert.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring now to the drawings, wherein like reference characters designate like or corresponding parts throughout the several views, a report cover 10 forming a first embodiment of the invention will be described. The report cover 10 will be used to enclose a report or document 12 which is bound by the conventional, well-known flexible comb binding 14. Comb binding 14 of this type is sold by GBC Co. Such comb bindings can be purchased, for example, through Office Depot in their office supplies Big Book of spring 2001 on page 579. While the report cover will be illustrated and described for use with a comb binding, it should be understood that the report cover 10 can also be used with other types of binding, such as spiral binding, wire loop binding and twin wire loop binding to achieve the same advantages.

GBC makes the flexible comb binding 14 from PVC plastic and, referring to Figure 3, the comb binding 14 will commonly have a backing 16 and a series of nineteen plastic rings 18. One end of each ring is formed integrally with the backing 16 and the other end is free. The natural resiliency of the rings 18 is such that the free end will typically curve around and engage the backing 16 to form a closed loop. GBC sells such flexible comb bindings in a variety of diameters to accommodate the thickness of a particular document and report, which is usually determined by the number of pages in the report. For example, flexible comb bindings are sold by GBC in diameters of 1/4 inch (manufacturer's number IBC18242), 5/16 inch, 3/8 inch, 1/2 inch, 5/8 inch, 3/4 inch, 1 inch, 1 1/2 inch and 2 inch (manufacturer's number IBC15322). A 1/4 inch diameter flexible comb binding is designed to accommodate a report of 20 pages while a 1 inch diameter comb binding is designed to accommodate 200 pages, for example.

As noted, the use of a comb binding 14 to bind a report often results in an awkward

assembly. A sufficiently large diameter flexible comb binding 14 must be chosen to bind the report in order to provide ease of turning pages. However, this often results in a larger diameter flexible comb binding 14 than the thickness of the report. This leads to problems stacking reports and using them because of the awkwardness of the flexible comb binding 14. As will be explained, the report cover 10 resolves all of these problems, provides an excellent final appearance to the report and has a "spine" surface for report titling to allow rapid viewing and access when the report is stored on shelves or in drawers.

The report cover 10 includes an insert 20 which is made of a relatively rigid material, such as a multiple ply cotton bond. Insert 20 can be 260 lb board, for example. Suitable rectangular holes 22 are formed along a first edge 24 of the insert, sized to receive the rings 18 of the flexible comb binding 14. (if report cover 10 was used with a spiral binding, the holes 22 would be round) For example, when using the common PVC plastic binding 14 with nineteen rings, nineteen holes 22 will be formed along the first edge 24, each hole receiving a ring 18. As the user opens the rings 18 on the flexible comb binding 14 to place the report 12 thereon, the user will also place the insert 20 on the binding so that it is at the back of the report.

The report cover 10 also includes a cover 26, which includes a back cover 28, a side spine cover 30 and a front cover 32. The cover 26 is preferably formed of a single piece of material, such as multiple ply cotton bond, which forms folding hinges 34 and 36 between the back cover 28 and side cover 30 and between the side cover 30 and the front cover 32. A pocket 38 is formed on the inside 40 of the back cover 28 to receive a portion of the insert 20, as seen in figures 1 and 5. This will hold the report 12 and flexible comb binding 14 within the cover 26. The width W of the side cover 30 is designed to be as wide or slightly wider than the diameter D of the flexible comb binding 14. Thus, as seen in Figure 4, the report cover 10 will surround and enclose the report 12 and flexible comb binding 14 to bind and protect the report 12 and the binding 14, while eliminating the

prior disadvantages in use of the flexible comb binding 14. As can be understood, it will be easier to stack a series of reports within report covers 10 using the flexible comb binding 14. Further, the flexible comb binding 14 will no longer be exposed to interfere with use of the report 12. Also, the report cover 10 provides a very attractive and professional final appearance to the document 12. With a “book-like” spine formed by side cover 30, the report cover 10 can be titled for easy retrieval while stacked, standing or filed in drawers.

The edges 42 and 44 of the insert 20 can be slightly tapered toward the edge 46 opposite first edge 24 as seen in Figure 3. This can act to wedge the insert 20 within the pocket 38 to resist shifting of the report 12 within the report cover 10. As illustrated in Figure 6, a tab 50 can be formed on the insert 20 to engage a receiver 52 in the pocket to provide a physical engagement of the insert 20 with the pocket 38 to resist removal of the report 12. An edge of the tab 50 can also be slightly tapered as seen in Figure 6 to provide a wedging action between the tab 50 and receiver 52. Alternatively, the insert 20 can be adhesively secured to the back cover 28 by a suitable adhesive 70 as seen in Figure 2, or secured by a Velcro hook 72 and loop 74 attachment as seen in Figures 2 and 3 or other suitable mechanism to hold the insert 20 within the pocket 38 of the cover 26.

The pocket 38 can be formed as a separate piece from the cover 26 and then glued or otherwise secured to the back cover 28. If a separate piece, the pocket will preferably have foldable tabs at three edges thereof which are folded inwardly and secured to cover 26 to provide a suitable pocket to receive insert 20. Alternatively, the pocket 38 can be formed as an integral piece of the cover 28 by suitably die cutting the cover 26 with the pocket 38 which can be folded into the final position and secured thereto by adhesive. When formed integral with the cover 26, the pocket 38 has side tabs 80 and 82 which can be folded inwardly and secured to the cover 28 to provide the pocket as seen in Figures 1, 2, 4 and 5. An advantage of a pocket 38 formed from a separate piece is that the pocket

can be made of lighter weight material than the cover 26. The tabs can be secured to back cover 28 by an adhesive covered by a peelable strip until use, glue or any other suitable securing technique.

As noted, while report cover 10 is illustrated for use with a flexible comb binding, other binding mechanisms such as spiral coils or twin loop wires can be used with report cover 10. Also, a conventional three-ring binder element 60 as shown in the inset in Figure 3 can be secured to insert 20. The report cover 10 would provide the advantage of enclosing the three-ring binder element in the same manner as the flexible comb binding 14. If a three-ring binder element were to be used, the three-ring binder element could be riveted to the insert 20 in the same manner that the conventional three-ring binder element is riveted onto the back of the conventional three ring binder cover, glued thereto or otherwise secured to the insert 20. Alternatively, insert 20 could have holes 62 formed therein as illustrated in dotted line in Figure 3 to fit the three rings of the binder 60.

With reference now to Figures 7-11, a modified cover portion 100 will be described that can be used in report cover 10 to substitute for the cover 26. An advantage of cover portion 100 is that it requires no adhesive or other separate fastener to form the pocket 102 therein to receive the insert 20. Pocket 102 can also be referred to as a pouch or receiver.

The cover portion 100 can be die cut from a single piece of material, such as multiple ply cotton bond, just as cover 26. Cover portion 100 includes back cover 104, side spine cover 106, front cover 108, side tabs 110 and end tab 112. The pocket 102 is formed by initially folding side tabs 110 inwardly toward the inside 114 of back cover 104 about hinge lines 116 and 118 formed in the cover portion 100 as seen in Figure 9 and then folding the end tab 112 over tabs 110 about hinge line 120 formed in the cover portion 100 as seen in Figure 10. The pocket is completed by folding the outer end 122 of end tab 112

about hinge line 124 back under the side tabs 110 as seen in Figures 10 and 11. The cover portion 100 thus forms pocket 102 to receive the insert 20 without the use of adhesive or any other fastener. The corners of the insert 20 inserted into the pocket 102 can be rounded to facilitate the insertion. The design of cover portion 100 also allows the pocket 102 to be disassembled, if desired, by simply reversing the process of forming the pocket by unfolding the end tab 112 and side tabs 110. As in cover portion 26, cover portion 100 forms folding hinges 130 and 132 between the back cover 104 and side cover 106 and between the side cover 106 and the front cover 108 so that the report cover 10 with cover portion 100 will also surround and enclose the report 12 and flexible comb binding 14 to form a book-like spine for labeling and titling, as well as to bind and protect the report 12 and the binding 14. Clearly, the report cover 10 using cover portion 100 can also be used with flexible comb binding, spiral coils, twin loop wires, conventional three-ring binder elements, and other and other binding mechanisms. Also, insert 20 can be adhesively secured to the back cover 104 by a suitable adhesive 70 or secured by a Velcro hook 72 and loop 74 attachment or other suitable mechanism.

While a single embodiment of the present invention has been illustrated in the accompanying drawings and described in the foregoing Detailed Description, it will be understood that the invention is not limited to the embodiment disclosed, but is capable of numerous rearrangements, modifications and substitutions of parts and elements without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention.